The German Roots of Nineteenth-Century American Theology (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), by Annette G. Aubert

Steffens und dem Medizinstudenten Adolph Müller unterwegs, zu Erholungszwecken, wohl aber auch aus geognostischem Interesse. Ein Faksimile der Eintragung ins Gästebuch der Grube Dorothea in Clausthal – von der Hand des begleitenden „Einfahrers" – überzeugt jeden Leser davon, dass der große Mann seinen Fuß tatsächlich auch hierhin einmal gesetzt hat. Die Frage allerdings, ob man einhundertundzwanzig oder doch nur einhundert „Lachter" tief eingefahren ist, muss leider bis auf weiteres ungeklärt bleiben.

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Annette G. Aubert: *The German Roots of Nineteenth-Century American Theology*. New York: Oxford University Press 2013, xiii, 402 pp., Hardcover, $ 74.00, ISBN 978-0-19-991532-2.

Transatlantic religious history has emerged in recent years as a major area of enquiry. *The German Roots of Nineteenth-Century American Theology* by Annette G. Aubert marks a notable contribution to this growing field. With considerable familiarity of American and German sources, Aubert brings the reader into close contact with a number of important though often overlooked theologians on both sides of the Atlantic. The book concentrates on the theological methods and theories of the doctrine of the atonement developed by two American figures standing in the Reformed tradition, Charles Hodge (1797–1878) and the little-known Emanuel Vogel Gerhart (1817–1904), but also devotes space to the influence of a series of German 'mediating theologians' (*Vermittlungstheologen*) on nineteenth-century American theology more broadly.

The book's general thrust might be summarised as follows. Scholarship on the sources of influence upon nineteenth-century American Christianity has tended to revolve around the Enlightenment in America, the abiding legacy of Scottish Common Sense Realism and Baconian science, and Transcendentalism and Romanticism, the latter especially as expressed by the English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge. These streams ran together at places like Princeton Theological Seminary (founded in 1815), stretching roughly from the seminary's first principal Archibald Alexander though Charles Hodge and his son A. A. Hodge to B. B. Warfield and the abbreviated tenure of J. Gresham Machen in the early twentieth century. Nevertheless, American Protestantism—particularly the Reformed tradition—received much of its impetus through German intellectual forces. Consequently, Aubert declares, 'It is the purpose of this book to provide a clearer

understanding of Reformed theology in nineteenth-century America by expanding the context to include German theology' (2).

Before taking up Hodge and Gerhart directly, she points up a number of examples of German theological inroads to the 'New World'. Alexander von Humboldt's *Kosmos* (1845–62) and the work of the German-educated Swiss scientist Arnold Guyot, who taught at Princeton Theological Seminary in the 1860s, received an enthusiastic reception by a number of Princeton's theologians. The Mercersburg movement, identified with John Williamson Nevin and Philip Schaff, promoted a version of Hegelian philosophy and drew deeply from the German mediating theologians. What is more, some 9,000 American students attended German universities from 1815 to 1914, a considerable number of which studied theology with such German luminaries as Friedrich Schleiermacher, E. W. Hengstenberg, F. A. G. Tholuck, August Neander, and Isaak August Dorner. The second half of the nineteenth century also witnessed numerous translation projects dedicated to bringing German theological texts into English. A few major theological periodicals in the United States—including the *Princeton Review* and *Mercersburg Review*—earmarked sections and sometimes entire issues for excerpts from German essays and lectures. American educational institutions occasionally purchased complete private libraries from prominent German scholars, as when the University of Chicago obtained Hengstenberg's extensive library in 1869. After the broad overview in the first chapter, Aubert discusses Schleiermacher's theological method and doctrine of the atonement in chapter 2 and supplies a snapshot of German mediating theology in chapter 3. These influences then come to fuller expression in Gerhart (chapters 4 and 5) and Hodge (chapters 6 and 7).

Gerhart held several pastoral and missionary posts before holding the presidency and chair of systematic theology at Ohio's Heidelberg College in 1851. In 1854, he moved to Franklin and Marshall College, and in 1868, he took a position at Mercersburg Theological Seminary. Though almost entirely ignored by historians and theologians, he was the first to present a systematic account of 'Mercersburg theology' as whole in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1894). As Aubert demonstrates, Gerhart's theological method was indebted to the 'central dogma' theories common to much of mid-nineteenth-century historical theology, deducing an entire theological system from one ostensibly overriding core doctrine. Gerhart's system relied on a unique conception of the 'Christ-Idea' as its guiding principle (101–104). Importantly, Gerhart formed his views on the historical development of doctrine as he read through the *Dogmengeschichte* of the Swiss-German mediating church historian Karl Rudolf Hagenbach (113). Aubert also argues convincingly for Gerhart's dependence at key junctures on the work of Schleiermacher, Carl Ullmann, Hagenbach, and Dorner in his dis-

cussion of sin, the incarnation, and sacrifice, which Gerhart 'perhaps unconsciously' synthesised with his interpretation of the Heidelberg Catechism (154).

Hodge had a fifty-six-year career at Princeton Theological Seminary, where he taught over three thousand seminary students. He was also a significant churchman and leader of the Old School following the 1837 breakup of the Presbyterian Church in the United States into Old and New School Presbyterians. For his many theological and ecclesiastical labours, he was known to some even during his lifetime as the 'Pope of Presbyterianism' and the 'Guardian of Orthodoxy' for American Calvinism. Studies on Hodge have tended to focus almost exclusively on his debt to the factors noted above (Scottish Common Sense realism and Baconian science) or to Francis Turretin, the early modern Swiss-Italian scholastic theologian at the Academy of Geneva. In fact, Turretin's three-volume *Institutio Theologiae Elencticae* was one of the standard textbooks at Princeton and was only replaced by Hodge's own three-volume magnum opus, *Systematic Theology*, published in the 1870s. Despite this emphasis, the beginning of Hodge's career included a study trip in Germany—formative to perhaps some extent—which he spent at the Universities of Halle and Berlin. Two biographical accounts of Hodge, both appearing in 2011, brought new attention to his time in Germany, where Hodge established connections with Tholuck in Halle and Neander in Berlin (Paul C. Gutjahr, *Charles Hodge: The Guardian of American Orthodoxy* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2011]; and Andrew W. Hoffecker, *Charles Hodge: The Pride of Princeton* [Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 2011]). Another study from the same year explored associations between Hodge and the conservative Prussian 'Awakening' movement (Andrew Z. Hansen, 'Nineteenth-Century Transatlantic Protestantism: Charles Hodge and the Prussian *Erweckungsbewegung*', *Pietismus und Neuzeit* 37 [2011]: 191–210). Aubert's book expands on these themes, though does not interact substantially with the three recent interpretations of Hodge in Europe. Still, she documents strong links between Hodge and Hengstenberg, the conservative, confessional Lutheran in Berlin's theological faculty (161). If Gerhart tended to embrace mediating thought, Hodge provides a counter-narrative of resistance. With a negative view of Schleiermacher and his students (though appreciate of their piety), Hodge appears in Aubert's description as an 'eclectic thinker willing to borrow from a broad range of sources' (224).

On occasion, the description of certain German writers—as in chapter 3—remains somewhat cursory. Though attending to a wealth of sources from both sides of the Atlantic, the particular contexts—theological and philosophical, but also literary, cultural, political, and social—of Gerhart and Hodge warrant further investigation. Nevertheless, Aubert offers a timely transatlantic perspective to issues regularly treated only within the boundaries of national borders. She incorporates various insightful student notes and other unpublished papers from the manuscript

collections of Gerhart and Hodge alike, which have been underappreciated in the past. Her book represents a welcome contribution to nineteenth-century studies addressing both the United States and Germany. Students of the history of modern theology and of intellectual history more generally will find much of value in it. *The German Roots of Nineteenth-Century American Theology* should inspire fresh looks at the sources of influence upon not only Princeton and Mercersburg, but nineteenth-century American Protestantism as a whole.

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